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Poetry.

Down The Slope.

Who knoweth life but questions death
With greetings of that summer day
When one is slowly lit from clay
On winged breath?

But man advances, far and high,
His fires fly with lightning stroke;
Till, worn with years, his vigor broke,
He turns to die:

When lo! he finds it still a life:
New ministrations and new trust;
Along a happy way that's just
Astride from strife.

And all the day following friendly feet
That lead us bravely to the light;
As one walks downward, strong and bright,
The slanted street—

And feels earth's benedictions wide,
Alone on forest, lake or town;
Nor marks the slope—he going down
The sunniest side.

O bounteous Nature's everywhere!
Perchance at least one need not fear
A change to cross from your love here
To God's love there.

Miscellaneous.

From Harper's Magazine for July.

THE BUTTON-HOLE BOUQUET.

L.

Nell Manning was a bright, loving body,
the daughter of a worthy old couple who
were "uncle" and "aunt" to the whole
neighborhood; she had a warm, sym-
pathizing heart, that caused her to feel a
deep interest in her friends' love affairs,
though as yet she was heart-whole her-
self, and seemed likely to remain so. One
of her dearest friends was little Maggie
Brown (the heroine of my story), a shy
little shrinking thing with two lovers, both
fine young fellows. One was Tom Har-
ding, for whom she only cared in a sisterly
sort of way, and treated tenderly because
she was sorry she didn't care more for him.
The other, Fred Bailey, was the joy of her
heart; but she was too shy to give him
more than the briefest glimpses of her
feelings, so that poor Fred was in a more
uncertain state than Tom, who did hope a
little, and even more than a little.

It was Nell's birthday, and Nell was go-
ing to give a party; not a city party by
any means, but a little country gathering.
Of course Tom and Fred were invited.
Maggie spent the day with Nell, helping
her to frost the cakes and finish up various
little matters of the sort; and then the two
went into the gay, old-fashioned garden,
where bright flowers abounded, and gath-
ered their aprons full, for the adornment
of the tea-table. Maggie had but little
skill in the arrangement of flowers, though
very fond of them, while Nell's quick fin-
ger could group them charmingly: so
when they came into the cool sitting-room
Maggie poured her gatherings on a large
waiver by Nell's side, and looked about for
a resting-place. Now the room had but
but two really comfortable seats in it. One
was the roomy sofa where Nell was seated
with the waiter of flowers by her; so that
place was pretty well taken up, for Nell
was a fine specimen of a young woman;
and the other was Aunt Peggy's easy-
chair, styled "Sleepy Hollow" which stood
by a window. It was Aunt Peggy's usual
custom to sit therein and gaze out, occa-
sionally sinking into such deep thought
that her eyes were quite tightly shut dur-
ing the meditation; but now the chair was
vacant.

"Mother has gone out about something,"
said Nell; "sit down in Sleepy Hollow
and rest awhile, so as to be fresh for this
evening"—a piece of advice that Maggie
took forthwith.

Nell went on with a stream of conver-
sation that was entirely on her own side,
and in the midst of other matters, gave
this bit of information:

"You see I am going to put a bouquet on
each lady's plate—isn't that a pretty idea?
I saw it in a book—but I am going to
make yours different from the rest. I know
somebody that likes to wear a knot of flow-
ers in his coat button-hole, so in the centre
of your bouquet you will find a few moss-
rose buds fastened by themselves, and ar-
ranged so that you can draw them out and
not pull the rest to pieces—that's a real
cute thought of mine, and I'm proud of
it. Now be sure to give it to him. I shall
tell him to expect it; don't you disappoint
Mr. F. B."

And then she talked about some-
thing else.

Alas! Maggie had not heard. A little
tired and rather heated, Sleepy Hollow
and the cool room were too much for her;
she sank into a brief slumber. Her nap was
a short one, but quite long enough to do
the mischief. She didn't hear a word
about the bouquet. Now comes in my
proof of trifles.

Had Aunt Peggy been in Sleepy Hol-
low Maggie would have staid out, and she
could not have sunk into forgetfulness in
any of the other chairs. But what took
Aunt Peggy out of that bewitching nook?
The cat running across the yard with a
chicken in its mouth. Young chickens
of late had disappeared mysteriously.
The cook accused the cat, but Aunt Peggy
said puss should not be convicted on any-
thing but the most direct proof; she turned
up her nose at circumstantial evidence;
but here was a proof the most conclusive.
Aunt Peggy's eyes were good, and she was
sure that she beheld the perfidious cat with
a little yellow ball of a chicken partly out
of her mouth; besides, there was "Old
Speckle" herself charging after the enemy
with her feathers ruffled to the last degree,
and followed by her piping brood scream-
ing at her heels. Out trotted Aunt Peggy
to condemn the offender, and so Sleepy
Hollow was empty, and Maggie sat in it
and slumbered, and finally came to pro-
longed sorrow of heart because of this
chain of circumstances.

One might well fear to step at all were
it not for the watchful, loving Lord above,
who turns troubles to our good; for, after
all, Maggie's sorrow developed her char-
acter and made her more than she would
have been had her life been without a cloud.

Later in the afternoon, behold Nell and
Maggie, lovely in their fresh muslins, re-
ceiving and entertaining the guests, among
whom flourished Tom and Fred. Just be-
fore going in to tea Nell managed to draw
the latter aside, and tell him of the button-
hole bouquet of moss-rose buds, which made
the young man glow with delight, and
give Nell a look of rapture that did not
make her stout little heart flutter a bit, be-
cause she knew that he saw nothing but
Maggie's face in the midst of moss-roses,
though at that moment Miss Maggie was
on the piazza with some young ladies and
Doctor Blythe, who afterwards made her
more trouble than either he or she thought
of. Doctor Blythe was a draper little
body, full of fun, and rather fond of prac-
tical jokes, never losing the least oppor-
tunity at that way.

At the proper hour the party sat in the
tea-room, where Aunt Peggy sat at the
head of the table, beaming smiles of wel-
come on all, and flanked by two stout do-
mestics, who were all readiness to hand
about delicious cups of tea and coffee, and
the more substantial parts of the enter-
ment. Nell saw her guests well disposed
of, and managed to have Tom at a good
distance from Maggie, who had been es-
corted in by Fred. Much laughing and
talking prevailed; if there was not much
but there was plenty that passed for it,
and that answered all purposes. In the
midst of it all some one called out to Fred.
"Why, Fred! I heard this afternoon that
there was an idea of your going to China
for several years, and that you were to
start at once. Is that true?"

Maggie's heart gave a great thump, and
she listened breathlessly for the answer.

"My uncle does wish me to go. I had
a letter from him to-day, and am to decide
by Monday. If I go, I must start for New
York then and sail on Wednesday; but I
have not yet decided."

"Dear me!" said Aunt Peggy; "that is
short notice; get the news on Saturday
and have to say yes or no by the next Mon-
day. The young folks will miss you a
deal if you go, and so will the old folks,
too."

Here arose a general chorus protesting
that he must not go, they could not spare
him—all joining with the exception of
Maggie, who couldn't speak, and Tom,
who wouldn't; for Tom, with all his hopes
had an uneasy feeling that, although he
would miss Fred quite as much as the
rest, it would be in a totally different
manner; therefore he thought it would be
well for Fred to improve his knowledge of
geography and gain some information in
regard to China and the customs of its in-
habitants. In the midst of the talking
Fred managed to say, in an under-tone,
to Maggie.

"Somebody else will decide for me. If
I get the button-hole bouquet, I'll un-
derstand that means stay. Don't you
think I ought to have it, when it was
made on purpose for me?"

All of which was Greek to poor Mag-
gie; and she did not dare to ask for an ex-
planation, for her breath was coming and
going in such a fluttering way that she
would not be able to control her voice.
So she sat mute, while many of the others
were eagerly talking to Fred; and Tom,
regarding her from a distance, was sure
she would have preferred having him by
her—Tom being possessed of a good share
of self-control.

When tea was over they flocked back to
the parlor, where dancing soon com-
menced. But things did not go well with
the unfortunate lovers. Fred had jealousy
and obstinacy tolerably well developed on
his handsome countenance; and these un-
desirable bumps just at this time ruled over
the other bumps; the consequence of
which was that he determined to say no
more till Maggie made a move and gave
him the flowers, or told him she would;
while she—poor little dear—would gladly
have gratified him had she known at all
what he wanted; but she was far too tim-
id to ask him. Then Tom got possession
of her, and a silly little flirt got hold of
Fred—a girl he didn't care a fig for; and
the two (Fred and Maggie) were about as
miserable as any other two would have
been under like circumstances.

At the close of the evening Maggie
stood near a window with a young friend,
a delicate girl, who looked with admiring
eyes on the bouquet Maggie held in her
listless hand, and exclaimed:

"Oh, what lovely moss-roses!"

"Would you like them, dear?" said
Maggie. "Take them home with you."

Poor child! She was sick of the flowers
and all else. The young girl took them
with delight; and her brother who was
standing by tall Ned Stone, said, "I'll put
them in the buggy for you while you get
ready, Mary." So Mary handed them over,
and Ned bore them away, for he was
a jewel of a brother, and his delicate sister
was the apple of his eye.

By this time he was just entering the
choir; and raising his eyes beheld Mag-
gie seated with her back to him, and ap-
parently listening to something Tom Har-
ding was saying to her. Tom bending ten-
derly over her to do it. Fred gazed at the
pair, jealousy beginning to awake. While
he did so Tom straightened himself, and
Fred was transfixed by seeing in the but-
ton-hole of his coat the cluster of moss-
rose buds. There was no mistaking them.
He not only recognized them, but besides
that, Nell was the only one in the village
who had them, and she had told him she
had cut all she had for Maggie's bouquet.

These thoughts passed like lightning
through his mind, and brought such cer-
tain conviction with them, that he instan-
tly turned, and descending the stairs made
at once for his own abode, where he re-
mained the rest of the morning, tortured
by disappointed love and raging jealousy.

Now, the offer of his uncle was consid-
ered with far different feelings. He looked
on it as a means of escape, and decided
to accept it. Having no relative but his
uncle, a rather cold person, of whom he
had seen but little, he had no family ties
to prevent his leaving his country even so
unexpectedly. Before, he could not bear
to leave the place where Maggie dwelt; now,
to remain was wretchedness; so his
resolution was taken.

But how did Tom get the flowers? Of
course Maggie could not have given them
to him even so she had been willing to do
so. Doctor Blythe returned home after
his professional visit, and sleep as he
was, did not forget to put the flowers in
water. Then he slept as a healthy coun-
try physician of good nerves can sleep.
He lived in a boarding-house, and one of
his fellow-boarders was in the habit of
straggling into his room at all times, the
doctor never locking his door, because on
one occasion when he did so they had to
nearly batter it down before he could be
awakened to attend a case that demanded
immediate attention. Accordingly this
young person, Jim Masters, "dropped in"
on this eventful morning. As the doctor
slumbered profoundly Jim had to look out
for his own amusement. He meandered
around the room and soon espied the bou-
quet. The doctor not being given to
those things, Jim's attention was aroused;
he examined it, and the flowers around
the moss-roses being slightly withered, he
saw that it was a bouquet. Nobody ever
stood on ceremony with the doctor, and
Jim least of all; so he had no hesitation
about drawing out the little bouquet. It
was still fresh, Nell having wrapped it in
a bit of wet moss around the stems. Then Jim
drew the other flowers together to conceal
the gap, and after that coolly walked off
with the button-hole bouquet. Just as he
left the house he encountered Tom Har-
ding. Tom looked so jaunty, and the moss-
roses seemed such a fitting ornament
for his button-hole, that Jim, in a sudden
fit of generosity, offered them; besides
that, he didn't care to keep them. Tom
stuck them in his button-hole, and shortly
after entered the choir, where he was en-
gaged in conversation with Maggie when
Fred saw him, the service not having yet
commenced.

It was the Wednesday afternoon follow-
ing, and Nell, who had been whipped off
on Sunday morning immediately after
church by a burly young farmer, who had
come in anxious haste for her, because his
delicate little wife wanted sadly to see
"Cousin Nell," and be benefited by her
soothing powers, had just returned,
leaving the farmer and his wife much the
better for her visit. And now, after brush-
ing up her curls and otherwise touching
herself up, she was seated at the tea-table
and opening her small budget of news for
the entertainment of her father and moth-
er, who listened with much interest. Hav-
ing finished the budget Miss Nell laid in a
fresh supply of bread and butter and rad-
ishes, and said:

"Well, mother, any news to tell me?"

"Only one thing," returned Aunt Peg-
gy; "but that's enough. Fred Bailey has
gone to China."

Nell was in the act of lifting a radish to
her mouth, and remained transfixed and
speechless in that attitude so long that Un-
cle Peter laid down his knife and fork and
regarded her anxiously.

"What?" cried Nell, at last, putting
down the radish. "To China, oh, mother,
don't tell me that!" For visions of poor
Maggie passed before her. Uncle Peter
shook his head and nearly groaned aloud.

"Yes," said Aunt Peggy, "gone for
good and all. He came up Sunday night
and asked for you, and seemed sorry
enough when I told him where you were;
and he said if it wasn't so far he'd go to

see you, but it would make it too late.
He looked dreadful cast down, and not
like himself at all. He bid me and your
father good-by, and thanked us for the
pleasant times he'd had here."

At this point Aunt Peggy had a little
choke in her voice, while Uncle Peter
availed himself of the opportunity to give
a faint groan, with his eyes still fastened
on Nell.

"And he left good-by for you and all
the girls," continued Aunt Peggy; "he
said he had no time to go round among
them. The next morning I saw him go
off in the stage. He was white as the
wall. He put out his head as he passed,
and just gave one wave of his hand, and
then sunk back as though he couldn't look
a minute longer."

Nell's appetite was gone. After a mo-
ment she rose from the table, and briefly
saying, "I am going to run over to Mag-
gie's mother," disappeared.

As soon as the door was shut Uncle Pe-
ter exclaimed, with a mournful shake of
the head, "My poor Nell! my poor little
Nelly!"

Aunt Peggy surveyed him with sur-
prise.

"Why, what in all the world has taken
the man? Why, father, it can't be that
you think Nell cares for Fred Bailey more
than a friend! You can put that out of
your mind, and don't go worrying your-
self for nothing." Then, in a lower tone,
"Nell! What bats men are after all!"

Uncle Peter having unbounded faith in
Aunt Peggy's wisdom and truthfulness,
was much consoled, and applied himself
with a relish to his supper, attending to
his share of it and Nell's too.

Meanwhile Nell made her way to her
friend. Her heart sank as she approached
the house. She expected to find Maggie
pale, drooping, heart-stricken; but as she
stepped on the broad piazza, to her amaz-
ement she heard a burst of laughter, in
which Maggie's clear notes rang out.
With wonder she entered the room, and
found her, with half a dozen girls around
her, listening to some joke of Tom Har-
ding's who sat near her, who, with bright
eyes and brilliant color, laughing merrily
with the rest. Nell had nothing left to
but join the circle, all receiving her with a
hearty welcome. The evening passed on,
Nell vainly trying to exchange a word
with Maggie. The more she watched
her the more uneasy she felt. The
faded friend could look more deeply in-
to that tender soul than the others could,
and she was not satisfied.

"Maggie," she whispered at last, "will
you come over and stay with me to-night,
or shall I stay here?"

Maggie gave one glance, saw the deter-
mination written in Nell's face and yield-
ed. "I will go with you," she replied,
faintly.

After the others had departed, and Mag-
gie and Nell were on their way to the
house of the latter, Maggie walked so fast
and asked so many questions relative to
Nell's visit that there was no opportunity
for aught else.

When they reached the house, Maggie
kissed Aunt Peggy in a laughing way,
telling her one of Tom's jokes, and then
ran up to Nell's room; but when Nell
went up, ten minutes later, she found a
despairing figure kneeling by the low
window, the head resting on the arms.
As Nell approached Maggie raised her
head. O, such a pale face she showed
—the color gone, the light quenched!
Nell said not one word; she sat down on
an ottoman by her and gathered her to
her warm bosom. Then the bitter grief
burst forth, not in wild cries, but in heavy
sobs and tears like rain, till at last she lay
quiet and exhausted in Nell's loving arms.
Then Nell's voice gently broke the sil-
ence:

"Maggie! I know he loves you dearly.
Why did you let him go?"

Trembling, creeping closer to Nell's
bosom she replied: "Oh Nell! I too
thought he loved me! But if he did, why
did he leave me so. He never said a
word—no, not a word."

Nell started in surprise. "There must
be a misunderstanding," said she. "Think
Maggie, and try to tell me all—what did
he say on Sunday?"

"Nothing," replied Maggie. "I never
saw him, though I heard some one say he
went up the choir stairs just before serv-
ice began; but he was not there."

"Tell me what happened in the even-
ing," said Nell; "he took you in to tea."
"Yes, but after that we were not togeth-
er at all; and before we left the tea-table
he seemed different; and all he said to me
about going to China was something at the
table about another deciding for him; if he
got the button-hole bouquet, he said it
would mean stay; but I didn't know what
he meant."

"But you gave it to him," cried Nell,
pushing Maggie back to look at her ear-
gery.

"Gave him what?" asked Maggie, trem-
bling and trying to draw nearer.

"Do you mean to say," exclaimed Nell,
"that you never gave him the moss-rose
bouquet I made, and told you how to draw
out? I told him you would give it to him
and that it was made for him."

alone. Oh my love! my love! And I
knew it all too late, too late."

She sank by the window and gazed with
straining eyes toward the distant horizon,
as though the soft moon-lighted clouds she
saw there were the white sails of the ship
bearing away her lover.

"He is gone!" she said, in tones of utter
despair, and stretched out her arms to-
ward the clouds.

"It is not too late," cried Nell, impetu-
ously walking up and down the room; "it
is not too late. I will write to him, and
he will come back in the next ship."

"No," murmured Maggie, faintly. "No
Nell, that I will never consent to. He
may have had other reasons to keep him
silent. He could have spoken again on
Sunday had he chosen"—for poor Maggie
had never noticed the flowers in Tom's
button-hole.

And to this determination did she ad-
here. Nell was astonished to find so much
firmness in that gentle spirit; but so weak
and trembling was she that Nell in alarm
undressed and laid her in the bed as one
would do with a child. Still before she
laid her sorrowing head upon the pillow
she made Nell promise that she would
not write.

III.

The months rolled on—slowly to poor
Maggie, who hid her secret so well that
none guessed it; slowly to other sad
hearts, but quickly to happy lovers and
bright souls. Another summer bloomed,
and the earth again brought forth her
beauties. To Maggie every opening flower
gave a fresh pang, though each pang
was a hidden one. Her character devel-
oped more and more; her secret sorrow
added to her pure and delicate nature the
very things it needed.

It was a lovely afternoon in June. Nell
was in the parlor, half dozing over some
fine stitching, when a step on the piazza
roused her, and the next moment plump
little Doctor Blythe trotted in. He drop-
ped on an easy chair and said, with a
sigh of satisfaction, "Pleasant room this."

Nell continued to stitch and almost
doze; the Doctor meditated, and did it
with his eyes fixed on the open window;
his gaze absently fell on the corner of
the piazza, and after a moment his light
brightened, and showed that he noticed the
spot. An amused twinkle beamed in his eye,
and in an instant more he chuckled. Nell
looked up inquiringly, glanced at the
chuckler, and then out of the window.
The Doctor explained:

"I was thinking of a joke of mine."

"What was it?" asked Nell, in a rather
drowsy tone.

The Doctor, in an animated voice, re-
lated the little story of his standing on the
piazza one night the previous summer,
when Ned Stone put a bouquet in his bug-
gy, and how he (the Doctor) forthwith
changed the flower bouquet for one of
grasses.

Nell listened with indifference. Maggie
had never mentioned what she did with
the bouquet, and Nell took it for granted
that she kept it.

The Doctor continued: "The whole
thing was a good joke; those flowers went
through so many hands; I wonder I never
told you of it, but I had some busy cases
about that time, and it went out of my
mind. I don't know where Ned Stone got
the flowers; but I stole them from him, and
took them home, and Jim Masters stole
the middle one."

Nell picked up her ears. "The mid-
dle!" said she.

"Yes," replied the Doctor; "he told me
of it afterward; said the middle came out
—was made up separate from the rest.
He took off the middle and gave it to Tom
Harding to stick in his coat—so you see
Ned Stone had the flowers, one; I, two;
Jim, three; Tom, four—four pairs of
hands they passed through," added the
Doctor, triumphantly.

Nell sat breathless, but she kept her
eyes down and stitched on while saying,
carelessly, "What kind of flowers were
they, Doctor?"

"Let me see," said the Doctor, reflect-
ively, "Tea-roses?—no; lilies of the val-
ley?—no. I have it! Moss-roses! I re-
member Jim said there was moss round
the roses and moss round the stems, for it
seems there was some moss wrapped
around the stems. I thought it a good
idea."

Nell made no reply; she understood that
in some way Fred had seen Tom with the
unlucky flowers in his coat, and had taken
it for granted that Maggie had given them.
After a moment she said, in a brightly
tone, "Doctor do you like waffles?" You
may be sure that the Doctor did. "And
peach marmalade?" continued Nell. The
Doctor's eyes twinkled—he had a weak-
ness for peach marmalade, and Nell knew
it; he cast a speaking glance upon her.
"Don't!" he murmured. (Aunt Peggy's
marmalade was known far and wide.)
"Then stay to tea, and you shall have
both," said the beguiling Nell.

The Doctor settled himself still more
comfortably in his chair, and said he
would. Nell went off to give directions,
and in a few minutes returned. She seat-
ed herself near the Doctor and commenced
a desultory conversation, that after a time
worked round to Fred Bailey—how pleas-
ant he was, and so forth.

"Have you ever written to him, Doc-
tor?" asked Nell.

"No," replied he; "never thought of it,
and don't know his direction either. You
know he wrote once to old Mrs. Johnson
where he boarded—the old soul was very
fond of him—to tell her that he had ar-
rived; but he gave no direction."

"You ought to write," said Nell; "he'd
be delighted to hear, I know; and you
could direct the letter to the care of his
uncle in New York, who would send it to
him."

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